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9 Exposing fear of mass migration in the Netherlands: a narrative approach to discourse analysis

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9.1 Introduction

Early 2004 the Dutch government decided to severely restrict freedom of labour for immigrant workers from the European Union's new member states. Freedom of labour (the right to take on paid employment in another member state) is fundamental to EU-citizenship and was formally issued to new EU-citizens based upon their country's accession into the European Union in May that same year. In rapid succession however, governments of most 'old' member states -with the notable exception of Ireland, the United Kingdom and Sweden- decided to close their domestic labour market for these immigrant workers for a period of at least two and possibly even seven years. Fears of massive flows of immigrants from new member states after EU-enlargement were widespread, as well as concerns about their impact on labour markets and welfare states. Through a narrative analysis of the Dutch decision-making process with regard to the controversial issue of free movement of labour, the following three research questions will be addressed in this paper. Who were the instigators (claims makers) of fear of mass migration in the Netherlands? How did fear of mass migration evolve over time involving whom? And thirdly, which role did opportunism from the side of politics and media play in the perception of labour inflow from new member states as a 'threat' to Dutch society, when opportunism is literally understood as acting according to the needs of the moment to one's own benefit? The paper first starts with a brief outlay of the way in which theoretical conceptualisations about fear of (mass) migration tie in to narrative as discursive research method.

9.2 Moral panics, risk society and narrative

'Fear of migration', and in this particular case 'fear of mass migration from new member states' can be firmly embedded in literature on moral panics, risk society and the 'othering' of migrants as strangers (c.f. Bauman 2004; Beck 1986; Critcher 2003; Hier 2003; Thompson 1998; Ungar 2001). Although an in-depth exploration of this literature would surpass the immediate aim of this paper, it is important to note that the otherwise indefinite notion of social fear or anxiety stretches beyond mundane concerns over, for example, immigrants supposedly 'stealing away our jobs' or 'shopping for social security' in a timeframe of economic slowdown. Rather, fear of

immigrants – whether they are labour immigrants or asylum seekers – is to a very important extent open for imagination and exaggeration. The idea behind the concept of ‘moral panics’, for instance, is that societies are continuously in search of folk devils; scapegoats who challenge its boundaries of morality and, closely related, of identity (Thompson 1998; Critcher 2003). Furthermore, the contingent and scale-indifferent nature of global fears in contemporary ‘risk society’ fuels a strong desire to re-introduce order and hence ‘the border’ into social space by those empowered to govern (Beck 1986; Ungar 2001; Hier 2003). Risk society painfully mediates immigrants as newsworthy deviants (Critcher 2003), disorder-bringing strangers (Hier 2003) and side-effects or even ‘the waste’ of globalisation (Bauman 2004).

The nevertheless very real spatial implications of fear of mass migration are, in the words of Flyvbjerg, “best understood narratively” (2001, p. 137). ‘Narratives’ are detailed chronological descriptions of the events unfolding in a particular case study setting. ‘Narrating’ is powerfully defined as “to best get an honest story honestly told” (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 137). The demand for strict adherence to chronology in a good narrative enables the researcher to draw conclusions on the existence of folk devils, panic instigators and other actors on stage, as well as on the articulation of moral boundaries into spatial ones. Media sociologist Chas Critcher for example describes the natural connection between narrative and moral panics as follows (2003, p. 141):

“We do not have to apply formal theories of narrative ... to note that most moral panics tail off when Something Has Been Done – or, more accurately, when Something Has Been Seen To Be Done. If what we have here is a kind of moral fable, in which retribution is exacted upon the perpetrators of evil, then moral panics can be deconstructed as narratives.”

Although this paper does not intend to draw conclusions on whether the Dutch decision process about free movement is a perfect case of moral panic or not, moral panics literature like the work of Thompson (1998) and Critcher (2003) inductively – on the basis of in-depth case study research – provides very useful insights into the chronology of social fear narratives. See for instance Table 9.1, wherein a number of subsequent ‘panic’ stages is identified ranging from emergence and media inventory to fade away and legacy. Rather than to search for stages, events, characteristics and actors strictly according to this processual model, it will be used as a guideline

Table 9.1 Emergence and fade away of moral panics: a processual model.

Stage/Event Principal characteristics and/or actors	
Emergence	Novelty, threat
Media inventory	Stereotyping, exaggeration, distortion, prediction and symbolisation, folk devil
Claims making	Moral entrepreneurs, relationship to media orientations, causal explanations
Expert involvement	Grounds for claims, media accreditation
Elite consensus and concern	Absence of organised opposition
Coping and resolution	Proposed solutions, measures adopted (procedural/legal and effective/symbolic)
Fade away	Timing, recurrence, subsequent status
Legacy	Long-term effects, relationships to other issues

Source: derived from Critcher, 2003, pp. 151-153.

sub-structuring the empirical material in order to answer the research questions formulated in the introductory section.

The use of narratives is gaining popularity across the wide array of social and policy sciences but causes reservations as well. The most important reason for this relates to the issue of transferability: mainstream methodological insights learn that (independent) research results should be 'summarisable' into *general* knowledge whereas the strength of case study research, which by definition incorporates a narrative element, lies not in the general but in the *detail* (Flyvbjerg 2001). Although summarising case studies into general knowledge can indeed be difficult, summarising itself is not always a (socially) useful activity for often, the narrative itself is the answer (Flyvbjerg 2001). The main goal of narrative therefore is to expose rather than to demonstrate (Czarniawska 1998). The quality of this exposition is enhanced when there is a sharp eye for detail: "in narrative, the perceived coherence of the sequel (temporal order) of events rather than the truth or falsity of a story element determines the plot and thus the power of the narrative as a story" (Czarniawska 1998, p. 5).

It is important to note that narratives place less emphasis on discursive context and the deconstruction of power relations, as critical or Foucauldian-style discourse analysis prescribes.¹ Narrative analysis is a problem-driven form of discourse analysis which, indeed, *intrinsically* provides answers to above all empirical research questions. Following Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001a and 2001b) on the meaning and contents of 'discourse' as a scientific concept, this paper regards discourse as text (debate, discussion) and conversely, text as discourse. Narrating, hence exposing text, is analysing discourse (see Wetherell, Taylor and Yates 2001a and 2001b).

The Dutch government's decision-making process over whether or not to deny labour market access to immigrant workers from new member states took over five months, broadly ranging from September 2003 until February 2004. During this period, the free movement issue developed into an intense political and public debate, closely monitored and covered by the various media. The aim in the remainder of this paper is to narrate the events culminating into the decision to close the labour market (or more precisely: to only grant access into a very limited and well-demarcated number of jobs, considered structurally not-to-be-fulfilled by Dutch workers). The analysis will draw on parliamentary documentation, news paper coverage (news, background reports, comments, columns), television broadcasts (news, interviews, discussions, documentaries) as well as electronic sources.

9.3 Fear of mass migration in the Netherlands: a case study narrative

An 'alert' member of parliament

According to Critcher, a key triggering event "may be found in the middle rather than at the beginning of a moral panic narrative" (Critcher 2003). Panic about potential mass immigration from new member states after EU-enlargement in the Netherlands was launched by Arno Visser, a Member of Parliament (MP) from the Liberal Conservative Party. When preparing for the parliamentary debate over the ratification of the Athens Treaty, Visser comes across the fact that contrary to most other EU member states at that time (summer 2003), the Netherlands had not yet taken a decision about labour market access for this group of immigrants. In an interview he recalls:

“I had just been appointed Member of Parliament, assembled all document material, and found out that parliament never really had discussed properly about the admittance of the eastern European immigrants. Every aspect [of the Treaty of Athens²] had been discussed and negotiated, but not this one”³ (Quoted in Weekblad Elsevier, November 15, text in brackets added).

Soon after, on September 24, Visser participates in a debate in the Dutch Lower Chamber, which is about an amendment of the so-called ‘Law on Alien Labour’ concerning the ‘acquisition’ of labour supply from states outside the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). During the discussion, he points to the fact that the previous Dutch government had based its decision not to close the labour market for immigrant workers from new member states on a report published in 2001 by the Socio-Economic Council, an influential advisory body to the government.⁴ At that time, the Dutch economy was still booming, and the report explicitly assumed these favourable circumstances to persist. In the course of the debate, Visser introduces the following motion:

“The Chamber, having taken notice of the debate, considering, that as a consequence of the economic slowdown unemployment in the Netherlands is increasing, that after accession of 10 new member states into the European Union a further distortion of the labour market can be feared caused by an inflow of relatively cheap labourers, that the accession treaty leaves open the possibility for the [present] member states not to open the labour market for these workers for a period of up to 7 years, calls upon the government to, if necessary, take measures in time by maintaining or accomplishing a general policy measure based on the Law on Alien Labour to keep the Dutch labour markets closed to employees from the new member states, for the time being...” (Official parliamentary documentation at <http://parlando.sdu.nl>, September 24).

The motion is directed to the then-Deputy Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Mark Rutte, who is responsible for Dutch labour market policy. Although Rutte is not completely convinced of the importance of the arguments brought forward by Visser, he admits that up-to-date information about the numbers of migrants to be expected after EU-enlargement is lacking, as well as knowledge about the positions of other western European countries besides Germany and Austria. He therefore promises parliament to come up with a memorandum on the advantages and disadvantages of issuing free movement to labour immigrants from new member states. Apart from labour market closure, he will also consider the possibility to hold on to the requirement of work permits after enlargement. This memorandum is due by the end of the year (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, September 24).

Spreading the word

After one month of relative silence, the issue is picked up by several other Members of Parliament, on both sides of the political spectrum. The immediate cause for this is the appearance of the Deputy Minister of Social Affairs and Employment in NOVA, a daily current affairs television programme, on October 28. During the broadcast, the expectation is uttered that 30,000 labour immigrants will be coming from Poland only. In response to this, the Deputy Minister declares that “these are no numbers to be worried about” (NOVA, October 28). A couple of days later, two MP’s of the Christian Democrat Party express their concern over

this statement, as they doubt the absorption capacity of the Dutch labour market for such a high number of immigrant workers. They demand to be told, firstly, the effects of these expected developments for domestic workers, the low-skilled in particular, secondly, an estimation of numbers of legal and illegal eastern European employees presently working in the Netherlands, and thirdly, how many of these people are in possession of a German passport, allowing them free entrance onto the Dutch labour market already (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, November 6).

That same week, conservative MP Visser who can by now be considered to be the instigator of the discussion, increases his pressure on Deputy Minister Rutte by officially asking him to clarify his expectations on the inflow of seasonal workers after EU-enlargement. This question is based on an article in the Agrarian Newspaper, reporting the building of hundreds of extra housing facilities for employees from new member states by a number of rural municipalities (Agrarisch Dagblad, October 30). Visser demands Rutte to examine unemployment rates and labour supply in the region in question, and whether the initiative taken by these municipalities is in accordance with official Dutch housing policy (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, November 5). In addition, he repeats his earlier posed demand to overrule the liberal stance of open borders taken on by the previous government. Rutte responds that he is working on the memorandum which will capture all of the questions asked (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, November 6).

On November 19, the Lower Chamber again discusses the ratification of the Treaty of Athens. Although the topic of free movement of labour is but one of the many topics on the agenda in the afternoon and evening of the day on which this much encompassing debate takes place, it turns out to be the most controversial one. Pim Fortuyn's List⁵ joins the Liberal Conservatives and the Christian Democrats in their wish that, due to the already disadvantageous and worsening economic situation in the Netherlands, and due to the fact that several neighbouring member states have already decided to close borders, the Dutch position not to do so should be reconsidered. The left-wing Labour Party, Democrat Party and the Green Party oppose rather firmly, evaluating such a reconsideration as 'being not very decent' and 'breaking a promise already made' (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, November 19). Nevertheless, in case *expected* immigration numbers will prove as large as to be a cause of concern, all of these parties declare to let go of their objections. The outer left-wing Socialist Party and the conservative Christian Parties share this view.

Enter the media

Although the heated discussion does not bring the actual decision any closer, as all of the political parties prefer to await the memorandum prepared by the Deputy Minister of Social Affairs and Unemployment, it causes a storm of media attention, particularly in the various national newspapers. In the days after the debate, several MP's are repeatedly quoted, most notably the Liberal Conservative MP Hans van Baalen⁶ who fears that "the Netherlands will become the lowest drain on the European labour market"⁷ if borders are kept open (quoted in De Volkskrant on November 20, and in Dagblad Trouw on November 22). The spokesman of the Labour Party and the spokeswoman of the Democrat Party in turn accuse the right-wing parties outright of 'arousing negative sentiments' outside of parliament in appearances in the general public (De Volkskrant, November 20). More specifically, they are referring to the visit of the Dutch Minister of Finance Gerrit Zalm to a conference of his Conservative Party. During the conference, Zalm declares himself 'against cheap Poles', as the headlines of an article covering the conference reveal (NRC Handelsblad, November 18). The Minister says:

“In case Germany, for instance, decides to temporarily close its labour market for Polish employees, they will flow to the Netherlands. We should not want that” (Quoted in NRC Handelsblad, November 18).

More important even than the supposedly provocative words Zalm utters, both spokespersons are tempted to draw the conclusion that the free movement issue has been discussed and perhaps even decided upon by members of the administration already, albeit behind closed doors. They are suspicious of a hidden agenda in favour of closing the labour market, in imitation of Germany, Austria and other countries (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, November 19). During the debate however, the accusation is denied by his fellow party members. In the aftermath, the Democrat Minister of Economic Affairs Laurens-Jan Brinkhorst relaxes the ‘hidden agenda’ theory, as he turns out to be a fierce advocate of free movement (De Volkskrant, November 26). This in fact is not all that surprising, as Brinkhorst is generally known to take on pro-European standpoints. The discussion in Parliament between, most notably, the Liberal Conservatives, the Christian Democrats and Pim Fortuyn’s List on the one hand and the Democrats, the Labour Party and the Green Party on the other manifests itself within the government between the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Affairs.

Contrasting opinions

With a deadlock between two powerful members of government thus reached, the last two weeks of November and the first two of December witness the rise of the public’s voice in the media. Whereas media coverage up until now consisted mainly of reports of debates in parliament and relatively short news flashes, comments on the issue of labour immigration from new member states can increasingly be found in opinion sections, columns and background articles. A telling example appears, for instance, in NRC Handelsblad on November 21, when an anonymous reader argues that the fear of eastern European immigrant workers stealing away jobs from domestic workers is very much out of place. S/he points at the fact that seasonal migration from central and eastern European countries has been a common phenomenon in the Netherlands in recent years to “mutual satisfaction of employers as well as employees”:

“Employers are happy because Poles work hard, don’t complain and hardly fall ill. With an old-fashioned work-ethic they will pluck gerberas, prune tomatoes or cultivate asparagus... Finding Dutch employees for these jobs, which are known to be quite harsh, has been impossible for many years now” (Quoted in NRC Handelsblad, November 21).

Subsequently, the reader argues for *combating* illegal immigration rather than *excluding* legal workers. Although hers or his professional background is unknown, it would seem that s/he has a substantial amount of background knowledge to the subject. In general, public comments about the issuance of free movement to labour immigrants from new member states come from people who can be regarded experts-in-the-field. Among them for instance Harrie Verbon, a professor of public finance, expressing his concern over the competitive position of domestic low-rated workers when the labour market is opened. He also points at a potential increase of government expenditures on social security benefits after enlargement (Het Financieele Dagblad, November 21). Verbon’s concerns are contradicted by MP’s Timmermans and Bussemaker from the Labour Party who accuse him of ‘elementary school calculating’ (Het Financieele Dagblad, December

10). Obviously irritated by these words, professor Verbon in turn accuses the Labour Party of engaging in 'ostrich policy' with regard to 'Polish hordes' (Het Financieele Dagblad, December 19).

From November 29 until December 13, the regional newspaper Limburgs Dagblad publishes an article series about Polish immigrant workers in the Netherlands and Germany, and more specifically in the province of Limburg. In eight background articles, a wide range of related topics is covered, ranging from the existence of 'malafide' labour agencies taking advantage of powerless immigrants to the negative consequences of the drain of young men from Polish villages. Although the series provides a realistic and by no means over-dramatised view of the issue, the objective reader cannot but conclude from it that there are indeed quite many immigrants to be expected after EU-enlargement. One of the articles is dedicated to German Poles from areas in southern Poland which prior to the Second World War belonged to Germany, who, still having German passports, will be able to freely enter the Dutch labour market regardless of the decision of the Dutch government. Most of the many Poles in possession of German passports are, according to the article, quite willing and indeed preparing to migrate after enlargement.

Similar conclusions are drawn by the makers of another article series in Het Financieele Dagblad, entitled 'The neighbours are coming'. Apart from sharing the concern over Poles with German passports being mistreated by labour agencies (December 6), they call in the expertise of a migration professor (November 28 and December 10), several economists (November 28) and the president of the largest labour union in the Netherlands (December 16).

Producing factual evidence

Determined to come up with a well-informed policy decision, Deputy Minister Rutte asks a renowned government-affiliated research bureau to conduct an in-depth study into the advantages and disadvantages of admitting labour from new member states. This Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (Centraal Planbureau) delivers the main 'ingredient' for the Deputy Minister's memorandum on January 14, 2004. In a brief, though detailed report, the Bureau concludes that in spite of other member states' decisions to temporarily shut down the labour market, a relatively small number of immigrant workers from new member states can be expected after enlargement. Drawing on an analysis of several scientific migration forecasts, the Bureau estimates an additional inflow of in between 3,500 and 8,500 immigrant workers (Centraal Planbureau 2004). This range does not include seasonal migration. Moreover, the majority of these immigrants is likely to fulfil still existing job vacancies in the bottom segment of the labour market. In that case, no substantial 'harm' will be done to the Dutch welfare state (Centraal Planbureau 2004).

For the Liberal Conservative Party, the report is convincing enough to let go of the demand to close the Dutch labour market. Spokesman Van Baalen says that numbers 'look good' (De Volkskrant, January 15). Minister of Finance Zalm however, also a Liberal Conservative, still holds on to his preference of closing the labour market. The same is true for the Christian Democrats and Pim Fortuyn's List, who seem to be determined not to issue free movement, regardless of the report and the forthcoming decision of Deputy Minister Rutte (De Volkskrant, January 15). In a 30-page letter published on January 23, almost a month later than initially foreseen, Rutte informs parliament about this decision, which turns out to be a compromise between opposing parties. Instead of fully opening or closing the Dutch labour market on the

first of May, a limited number of 22,000 immigrants will be allowed access (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, January 23). This figure is based on the estimations made by the bureau, complemented with numbers of seasonal migration. In case more than 22,000 people enter, the labour market will be closed. The letter explicitly states that caution is in order:

“In this respect, it is important to keep in mind that, as the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis annotates, the estimations are surrounded with insecurities. This insecurity about the actual number of labour migrants contains a risk that gains weight when unemployment in the Netherlands rises” (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, January 23).

For this reason, the government leaves open the possibility to take additional restrictive measures if preliminary numbers of migrants indicate the necessity to do so. Asked about his reaction to the letter, Dutch Prime Minister Balkenende firmly replies:

“We do acknowledge free movement of persons, but we will not overlook the effects for our labour market” (Quoted in *De Volkskrant*, January 23).

Herewith, one would expect the issue to be ‘dealt with’. However, when discussing the letter in parliament on February 3, a majority of parties (the Liberal Conservatives, the Christian Democrats, Pim Fortuyn’s List and the Socialist Party) evaluates the proposed limit as being not strict enough. Still convinced of a greater migration ‘threat’ than forecasted by the Bureau, these parties introduce no less than five motions in the course of the debate, either highlighting a specific aspect of the free movement issue or proposing a solution (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, February 3). There is, for instance, a demand that official requirements for receiving a work permit for immigrant workers from new EU-countries should be as strict as those for non-EU (and non-EFTA) employees. Another motion questions the migrant’s ability to integrate into Dutch society, and consequently pleads for them to become acquainted with Dutch language and culture (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, February 3). The argument proposed by spokesman Varela of Pim Fortuyn’s List is particularly lively, as it refers to the love/hate relationship between the Dutch and water:

“Driven by a dead-end situation in their home country and hoping to receive a royal income here, workers will massively go westward. It is like water, always flowing to the lowest point. Coincidentally, the Netherlands is the lowest country in Europe, which means that we need to be prepared. If the flow turns out to be high tide, we will be too late, because we failed to take appropriate measures by digging a canal and building dikes” (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, February 3).

Upon receiving so much criticism, Deputy Minister Rutte promises to discuss the issue within the government once again.

A climax at last

After almost five months of intense, sometimes heated debates and discussions in parliament and the various media, the ‘fear of mass migration’ narrative reaches its climax when the government decides upon a final solution on February 13, 2004. In a second, much shorter letter

to parliament, Rutte announces that instead of installing the 22,000 maximum, migrants from new member states will be granted access only into specific sectors of the economy (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, February 13). In these sectors, labour shortages should be perceived as structural and not-to-be fulfilled by Dutch workers (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, February 13 and De Volkskrant, February 14)⁸. The majority of sectors however will be closed until 2006. Having achieved this result, the demanding political parties clearly emerge as overall ‘winners’ of the debate. The most important opposing actors, the Democrat Party and the labour union declare themselves very disappointed. They question the feasibility of the measures proposed, especially with regard to the drawing of a shortlist of ‘open’ sectors to be adapted and updated according to the needs of the moment (De Volkskrant, February 14, and Dagblad Trouw, February 14). Still however, the government explicitly keeps open the possibility to further restrict free movement in case either the number of immigrants coming exceeds expectations, or the enlargement process of the European Union enters a new stage.

On February 11, NRC Handelsblad opens with the heading ‘Inhospitable Europe makes Poles feel bitter’, introducing a story about feelings of unpleasant surprise and resentment among policy makers and citizens in Poland as an immediate reaction to the decision of so many member states to install transitional periods with regard to free movement of labour.

9.4 Politics of fear: on morality and opportunism

The narrative shows that claims making activities by politicians in the Dutch Lower Chamber, opinion makers and experts-in-the-field of labour migration have been both frequent and intense. In general, one could certainly conclude that ‘elite actors’ rather than the ‘vox populi’ have shaped political and public debates on the free movement issue in the Netherlands in above all ‘upper-class’ media: articles and comments in newspapers and on the internet, discussions and documentaries on television. Although the various media have been very much eager to cover the sometimes heated debates between advocates and opponents of free movement and to articulate prevailing insecurities in background stories and broadcasts, far-reaching stereotyping and exaggeration were not found, with the exception of some provocative headlines and denigrating quotes (‘cheap Poles’, ‘Polish hordes’).

On the surface, then, ‘fear of mass migration’ in parliament and media would appear to concern a potential *ousting* of domestic workers by immigrant workers from new member states. And indeed, worries about job access and the (future of the) welfare state are not all morally flawed regarding current problematic circumstances in both of these ‘segments’ of Dutch society. Yet, what most politicians and experts-in-the-field agree upon is that immigration might – and in many cases already does – contribute to solve *structural* labour shortages into more sectors of the economy than the only very few which are opened now. Transferring the responsibility for the ill-functioning of these sectors in terms of domestic labour market participation on to immigrant workers reflects sheer political opportunism aimed at short-term satisfaction of electorates. What is more, the Dutch case completes a ‘chain reaction’ of fear in the European Union: almost all other ‘old’ member states decided to restrict labour from new member states well before the Dutch government did, further fuelling insecurity and hence political pressure to delay free movement. Precisely here is where irrationality comes in. Beyond (partly) rational fears of job loss, the narrative’s actors are afraid that open borders would lead, tellingly quoted by Dutch sociologist Erik Snel, “to uncontrollable consequences, to *overstretch*

threatening our society's character" (Snel 2003, p. 15). Images of such moral overstretch in the reporting media have fed this politics of fear and therewith the perceived need for boundary enforcement.

Also, the narrative draws attention to EU-enlargement rounds still to come, starting with the striven-for accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. Here, the question arises whether migration fears in member states will co-determine where the geopolitical expansion of the European Union ends. Recent progress in accession negotiations with by far the most controversial candidate member state, Turkey, instantly caused rumours of massive flows of Turks to be expected. The re-bordering of the European Union is a yet unfinished process, and so will be the efforts to border labour immigrants. With the exception of a few who are directed towards clearly specified sectors in order to fulfil well-demarcated jobs, most are kept out as politically undesired strangers in spite of their sometimes obvious market-desirability. This suggests that fear of (mass) migration in the Netherlands is rooted in a complex interplay of opportunism and (ir)rationality, which otherwise remains open for further deconstruction.

9.5 Conclusion

The case study narrative elaborated in this paper supports the view that political decision-making with regard to (nowadays almost by definition sensitive) migration issues are both grounded in and caused by fears of becoming 'flooded' by mobilities of an insecure size and impact. The desire to 'secure the insecure' and 'order the disorder' through (re-)bordering, which the narrative clearly demonstrated, is quite in accordance with contemporary migration language wherein business-inspired concepts such as 'management' and 'controllability' (of migration) abound. At the same time, research on transnational migration flows is carried out in highly interdisciplinary surroundings by economists, sociologists and law scientists, to name but a few, employing a variety of research methods: quantitative forecasting and impact studies, institutional analyses, and ethnographic inquiries into migration motives. A narrative approach to discourse analysis can make valuable contributions to this interdisciplinary body of work. For, as was shown in this paper, narratives are powerful tools to critically reflect on the discursive making of today's immigrants into undesirable and hence to-be-managed-and-controlled 'side-effects' of globalisation.

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Notes

- ¹ Two excellent examples of critical discourse analyses of migration and asylum issues are Van Dijk (1997) and Lynn and Lea (2003). Van Dijk (1997) gives an in-depth account of processes of constructing 'others' out of immigrants in western European parliaments. He convincingly demonstrates that, indeed, parliamentary debates often negatively represent immigrants as unknown others and therefore threats to the nation. Taking on the perspective of the general public, Lynn and Lea (2003) analyse the ways in which public opinion about

asylum policy in the United Kingdom as expressed in newspapers contributes to the social construction of asylum seekers. They identify a discursive rhetoric which much resembles the creation of a 'new Apartheid' with regard to asylum seekers.

² In this treaty, the accession of ten new member states into the European Union was officially laid down.

³ All quotes are literally translated from Dutch. I have attempted to stay as close to the exact meaning of the Dutch texts as possible without producing bad English (or good 'Dunglish', as some prefer to call English with obvious Dutch word use and sequence).

⁴ The current Dutch government is a centre-rightwing coalition of the Liberal Conservative Party, the Christian Democrat Party and the Democrat Party.

⁵ The right-wing party established by Fortuyn in the run-up to the 2002 parliamentary elections continued its existence under the same name after his death.

⁶ Van Baalen is a fellow party member of MP Visser who initiated the debate in September 2003.

⁷ According to the official report of this debate in the Lower Chamber, Van Baalen actually says 'the lowest point on the European labour market' instead of 'the lowest drain' as the newspapers quoted. The Dutch words for point (punt) and drain (put) are very similar, implying that either parliament's stenographer or a recording journalist could have misheard it. In either case, the word 'drain' indisputably adds a dramatic flavour to the statement (<http://parlando.sdu.nl>, 2003).

⁸ The following jobs and sectors are appointed: international truck drivers in transport, sailors and helmsmen in inland shipping, operating room assistants and radiotherapy/diagnostic laboratory attendants in health care, boners and butchers in the slaughtering industry. In the last days prior to enlargement, labour market access is temporarily (for a period of two months) extended to include seasonal workers in agriculture.